Most scholarship of the pre-revolutionary Russian working class has searched for or assumed Marxist, Social Democratic (SD), or Bolshevik-oriented signposts along the path of Russian working class development. It has also tied this history to a narrative about the Bolsheviks’ rise to power.¹

This approach in effect silences alternative voices and reduces Russian revolutionary political culture to a shadow of its multi-strained reality. The authors of this study suggest a completely different approach.

One of the authors (Melancon) has a deep interest in the history of the Socialist Revolutionary (SR) and Left Socialist Revolutionary (Left SR) parties. At the outset of his research during the early 1970s, he viewed the SRs as a peasant-oriented party, adrift in a proletarian revolution that proceeded under the auspices of the worker-oriented Social Democrats and especially the Bolsheviks. All of these "insights" reflected predominant historiographical tendencies. Exposure to primary sources soon dissolved that complex of ideas, after which he devoted much effort, with mixed success, to adjust prevailing views, not just about the SRs but, concomitantly, about the workers' movement, the revolutionary movement, and, indeed, the 1917 revolutions.

The other author (Pate) began a study of Menshevism between the revolutions under similar suppositions. Since most scholarship about Russian Social Democracy and the revolutionary movement focuses on leading theorists and on restricted periods (the years prior to and including the 1905 revolution and the year 1917), emerging post-1905 revolutionary and working class identities disappear from view. It also follows that the 1917 revolutions appear with scant social and political foundation, oddly decontextualized.2 In these and other studies, the Bolsheviks, in reality a whole medley of groups, tendencies, and individuals within a re-united (1906) and then partially re-fractured (1912) Social Democratic movement, mysteriously achieve the status of a coherent "Bolshevik Party" that supposedly operated under Leninist auspices. Entirely overlooked by historiography, throughout most of Russia Bolsheviks, Mensheviks, and non-aligned SDs co-existed in unified organizations until summer or even fall of 1917. This un-noted circumstance is of incalculable analytical import. Furthermore, Menshevism, indeed all Soc-

Press, 1993). Although Social Democracy is not mentioned in their titles, these and other studies of Russian labor, with very few exceptions, focus heavily on Social Democrats. These studies' bibliographies also fail to include non-SD worker-oriented publications such as those listed in footnote 19 below, a selective use of sources that inevitably yields tendentious results.